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MONTHLY LETTER

Devoted to Spiritual and Philosophical Problems -- by Manly P. Hall

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QUESTION—Some metaphysical Teachers promise that through the study of their philosophies students can evade the effects of certain natural laws such as Reincarnation and Karma; other metaphysical Teachers promise miracles of health and prosperity to their followers; and still others assure their disciples spiritual and material protection against the evils of life. Please clarify the relationship between codes of spiritual action and the material rewards arising from such action.

ANSWER—As we have explained in previous letters of this series, the field of popular metaphysics is now a battlefield of competitive isms. There is no code of fair play among the merchants of pseudo-religion. Memberships are built up on the catch-as-catch-can policy. All is fair in love, war and metaphysics. Many cults unquestionably set out on a course of high intentions and noble purposes, but the ideas behind these movements are not big enough or substantial enough to command a general hearing or a wide acceptance. It is when faced with such a problem that metaphysical movements frequently sacrifice integrity upon the altar of success. It was once observed by a prominent business man that it takes a great deal of advertising to sell an inferior product, and nearly all over-advertised products are inferior.

In metaphysical movements two distinct types of organizations are easily distinguishable. The first is the comparatively sound and sensible type, which

advertises modestly and holds its memberships together by the value of the instruction given and not by extravagant misstatements of fact. The other type of cult follows a business policy even more blatant than that of the patent medicine vendor of years gone by. The very business methods of such organizations should condemn them to reasonably minded people, but unfortunately in religious matters few people are reasonably minded. The business man does not expect miracles, but the metaphysician is always hoping for the impossible.

Fakery and elaborate promises always go hand in hand. Fakery generally follows the line of least resistance. Nearly all people want to be beautiful. In this department metaphysics and cosmetics share the spoil. Nearly everyone wants to have a dominating, powerful, magnetic personality. Nearly everyone desires to be a citizen of distinction in his own community. The poor desire money, the moderately comfortable desire wealth, and the wealthy desire more wealth. The sick want to be well, the lame, the halt and the blind want to be relieved of their infirmities. These desires taken together are a fertile field for an individual with the exploiting instinct. Fifty per cent of the population of this country may be regarded as poor, and poverty is a terrible thing under an economic system which reserves practically all opportunity for the wealthy. No small proportion of the population may be accepted as suffering from some form of poor health, real or imaginary. Add to this the spiritual fact

that nearly every living person has a bad conscience, and you can get some idea of the magnitude of the problem under consideration.

Of course, all of the dissatisfied and the infirm are not within reach of the metaphysical spellbinder. Millions are intrenched behind the battlements of the various orthodox religious organizations, where incidentally, a good number of them are better off. Another considerably smaller block is secure behind an impregnable consciousness of materialism, a protected if uncomfortable position. It is safe to say from the records that have been kept, however, that there are between ten and twenty million people in America belonging to what may be termed a broad-minded stratum. These people, most of them well-meaning but the majority utterly ignorant of the facts of life, are imposed upon year after year and deceived time after time, wasting time and money upon unimportant or fraudulent beliefs and doctrines.

But if fraud succeeds and reaps a golden harvest, all of the blame does not rest with fraud. A person stupid enough to be deceived, and waiting with open purse for some fantastic personality to come along and fleece him, is certainly a party to the crime. People fundamentally honest, in either material or spiritual matters, are not easily fooled. It is the streak of dishonesty in human nature that makes fraud profitable. People desiring something they have not earned are almost certain to lose in their effort to get it. It is the stupidity and cupidity of millions that sustain corruption in every department of society, and religion cannot remain pure and undefiled while the men who make up the belief are in themselves corrupt.

Many metaphysicians have come to me with their tales of woe, of how they only wanted the Elixir of Life, the Philosopher's Stone, and the secret of eternal wealth; that it had been promised to them in ten easy lessons at the ridiculously low sum of twenty-five dollars, and that they had been viciously cheated by a nasty man who could not deliver the goods. The picture is extremely ludicrous unless you are the victim, then it is a dastardly disaster. While it is probably true that the misrepresenting "mystic" should be behind bars, it is also

true that people fooled by such nonsense ought to be kept in a safe place also.

If a man says to you that he can stop the workings of Reincarnation and Karma, suggest that he first give you a practical demonstration of his ability by stopping the motion of the sun, or like Canute the Dane, seat him by the shore of the sea and order him to change the tides. Universal law is as immutable as the seasons, as inevitable as the course of the stars, and no metaphysical maestro is going to alter these inevitables in ten lessons or in ten million lessons. The law of cause and effect is as inevitable as day and night, as certain as the tides, and as constant as the ages. This law says that as ye sow, so shall ye reap. What you earn comes to you, what you have not earned can never be yours, and neither god nor man can alter the complexion of these facts. Universal laws are inevitable and the universe is never for one moment trusted to the keeping of the prophet, false or true.

There is no teaching more dangerous than that of special dispensation and special privileges. There are no such things in the universe and anyone claiming to be able to administer them is either self-deluded or fraudulent. If there be one thing constant in the universe it is law. This law is the hope of the wise, the firm rock upon which the informed build their philosophy of life. It is a fatal day for the truth-seeker when he lets some pseudo-mahatma talk him out of the realization of universal integrity.

Now let us see something of the truth of the situation. What are the material results of a life dedicated to a spiritual code of action? Of course we are referring now to a life. This does not mean a few weeks of instruction or ten simple lessons. It means exactly what the words themselves mean—a lifetime, year after year lived honestly and intelligently. A man is not spiritualized because he reads books, or because he studies with some famous teacher, even if that teacher is bona fide. He is not spiritual because he knows spiritual people, or because he recites a few platitudes morning and evening, or because he goes into the silence, or because he prays a formula, or because he chants Sanskrit, or because he pays dues to a metaphysical organization, or because he has been "initiated" into some mystical cult. He is only a spiritual person because

year after year he lives a spiritualized, philosophical life. There is an old saying common to the clergy, that the parishioners want to go to heaven on the coat-tails of the ministry, and there are a great many people who believe that their spiritual salvation is all worked out because they have joined an organization with advanced views, or because they believe in Reincarnation and Karma, or because they love animals. Some think they work out their eternal destiny with diet. Others strive to breathe their way into a divine state. Others use packages of appropriate herbs gathered by a "mahatma," on the top of the Himalayas, sold at a dollar a package to the believers. Religion is not a fancy process of mechanical exercises or affirmations. It is not something that you rub on. It is something you live day by day. Religion is the improvement of the self by a constant course of self-discipline, called the philosophic life. It is something to be lived, not talked about; something to be practised, not affirmed. The great metaphysical systems of the past have descended to us in a fragmentary condition due to the centuries of theological blight that nearly destroyed classical philosophy. Pythagoras and Plato were metaphysicians, so were Buddha and Confucius, but their metaphysics has little in common with the popular brand. The school of Pythagoras produced over a hundred and fifty great philosophers, men who conquered the physical life and rose sublimely above all of the limitations and illusions of the flesh.

To begin with metaphysics, actually, is not a popular belief. It is a system of thinking appropriate only to highly organized and highly trained minds. ~~When the housewife wishes to become a metaphysician,~~ she must realize that she is attempting a study that has taxed the capacity of the world's best organized intellects. She must approach her subject slowly, ready to give at least five or ten years to foundation work before she attempts to launch her unprepared intellect upon the vast ocean of learning. Metaphysics is for thinking people, and when the thoughtless take it up, then comes the deluge. This may make the whole subject seem very difficult and impossible and be a great discouragement to the optimistic, but it is far better that they be discouraged in the beginning than disillusioned later,

after years of sincere and misspent effort. While the blind lead the blind in spiritual sciences, the great truths of nature appear only in distorted and unnatural forms.

To study metaphysics in the hope of curing a stomach ache, or of attaining cosmic consciousness, or increasing the income, is to be guilty of sacrilege to say the least, or possibly better, absurdity and effrontery. It is worse than binding the gods to the millstone of greed. The trouble with modern metaphysics is that the majority of so-called metaphysicians have not the slightest idea as to either the subject or its scope. An appropriate simile is difficult. We might say that metaphysics is a vast structure, a noble temple, with its footings in the foundation of the universe and the vast arch of heaven itself its only roof. The ages have sought for truth. Hundreds of millions have lived to achieve it and millions have died for it. Heroes, martyrs, sages, saints and prophets, world Saviours and demigods of forgotten ages, are the priests of this great house. The gates of this sanctuary are to be approached only with reverence. The ancient road that leads to it is worn smooth with the footsteps of uncounted multitudes, and the modern metaphysician of today is so incapable of perceiving even dimly the immensity and sanctity of this science, that he confuses this divine program with a business mens' cooperative luncheon club, or a local clinic.

The Ancient Wisdom offers nothing to a disciple of the Great Work but the opportunity to improve himself by a consistent program of intelligently directed effort. In the East, discipleship is a rigid discipline without reward or promise. No individual is ready for a religious or philosophical life while he has to be induced into the process of being good by promises of material reward. Wise men study philosophy, not so they will remain young forever, but that they may grow old wisely. No man studies the Ancient Wisdom teachings with a view to increasing his personal wealth, because philosophy, if anything, will probably separate him from what he now has. Philosophy makes men rich not in outward possessions but in inward consciousness. Philosophy stores up treasures within, where thieves cannot steal nor time corrupt. Jesus did not teach a doctrine of wealth and prosperity. He bade those

who would be his disciples to leave what they had and come with him. It is written of the Christian Master that the foxes had holes and the birds had nests, but the Son of Man had no place to lay his head. Buddha left wealth behind and journeyed up and down the Indian road with beggar's bowl. Mohammed sacrificed a fortune and became a hunted wanderer without wood for a fire or enough food to eat. He wove his own clothes and pegged his own shoes.

The philosopher lives to give to others, and to bring joy to others and to serve others, retaining less and less for himself. How different is this glorious impersonal vision from the distorted picture of hundreds of foolish people listening frantically to metaphysical platitudes, in the hope that this listening will add a few dollars to their income! The whole picture is just wrong. The words of the great are misquoted. Fraudulent teachers try to picture Jesus as teaching a doctrine of prosperity, the Eastern saints as inviting the foolish to Nirvana. The law and the prophets are misquoted and mis-translated in an effort to make them justify the foolish belief that God wants all men to be healthy, happy and rich whether they live well or not. As a matter of fact, the universe has no particular interest in man's happiness, any more than man is moved deeply by the state of comfort or discomfort that may exist in a beehive or ant-hill. In nature man is simply a troublesome biped, of distinctly destructive tendencies, living off the toil and life of others.

In order to be happy, man must live well. He must be honest to his world, honest to himself, and conscious of the purpose for his own existence. If man keeps the laws of life, lives intelligently and nobly, and uses his mind for the perfection of his inward nature and for the assistance of others, he is entitled to a reasonable amount of happiness. In fact, if he does these things, he is happy and is not spending his time looking around for platitudinous solutions to his imperfections. The same principle applies to the problem of wealth. Nature has not decreed nor the universe foreordained that man should be wealthy; in fact the whole theory of wealth is of human fabrication, for nature stores up what it needs and man accumulates what he does not need. If the law of Karma brings wealth to an

individual it becomes a problem in opportunity and responsibility. The prophets of old and the great World Teachers were certainly far too wise to advocate a program of universal wealth. Wealth is the heaviest responsibility that an individual has to carry in this world, and right decision concerning its use is one of the heaviest causes of Karma. It is a constant temptation and binds the individual to a host of responsibilities and decisions. It takes up a vast amount of time and renders the mind confused and wearied and unfitted for philosophical study. So the possession of it is certainly no fundamental requisite of metaphysics. Those who have earned it for this life, by the law of Karma, have it. Whether they continue to have it or not after this life depends upon the use they make of it. As Buddha so wisely observed, the misuse of wealth must inevitably result in poverty in the future life.

True metaphysics is concerned with universal facts, with the divine life of man that extends far beyond this mortal sphere. True metaphysics is life under law, man flowing through the universe upon the currents of divine law like a ship moved by the great currents of the ocean. The wise man does not desire to escape from law but rather aspires to perfect harmony with it. There is a beautiful sentiment in the words of Confucius relating to this mystery. "Fishes," said the Chinese sage, "are born in the water. Man is born in the law. If fishes find ponds they thrive; if a man lives in the law he may live his life in peace." Any metaphysical teacher, therefore, who would tempt man's mind away from the acceptance of those universal principles which sustain the world is guilty of the promulgation of false doctrines.

Metaphysics, like all the great branches of learning, has its own tradition and its own descent through a sequence of enlightened teachers. The great doctrines of metaphysics are all thoroughly established, and no important change or reform of the principles is likely or possible. Metaphysicians of today are not wiser than Lao Tze, more able than Plato, or more profound than Sankaracharya. It is a foolish man indeed who would attempt to reform the wisdom of the ages when he cannot reform the foolishness and error of the present generation. A student who desires a firm foundation in the princi-

ples of metaphysics cannot do better than to make part of his life the seven requisites of perfection established by the initiate philosophers of India. The statement of the seven requisites is given under the collective title of the PARAMITAS. These are the rules and regulations of personal conduct indispensable to the mystical or philosophic life. Three different orders of PARAMITAS are to be found in different teachings, arising from the same root. In one order there are six regulations, in another ten, but the order of seven most clearly sets forth the required virtues which must precede enlightenment in any legitimate metaphysical system.

The seven PARAMITAS are as follows:

1. *DANA*, which means charity, a word which infers the whole philosophy of giving, serving and sharing. Without charity there can be no virtue, without virtue there can be no wisdom, and without wisdom there can be no inward life. *DANA* is therefore the administration of social relationships, the overcoming of the error of the possessive urge, the real fundamental and honest desire to be of assistance to the needs of mankind. Charity is not only in physical things but in thoughts and opinions. We must not only give of what we have but of what we are. Charity is the overcoming of prejudices, the establishment of the realization of common purpose, common need, and common good. This might seem far remote from a metaphysical doctrine, but all inward development must to a considerable degree be influenced by the concepts and attitudes of the outer life.

2. *SHILA*. This word is variously interpreted to mean either harmony, obedience, or the keeping of the precepts, that is, the various regulations of virtuous conduct. Harmony is inward peace arising from realization, from obedience to the laws of life, and from the keeping of the philosophical precepts. Harmony is the beautifying of action, the invoking of an entirely constructive and cooperative mood. The thought may be summed up in the Western statement that he who lives the life shall know the doctrine. Without harmony there can be no sensitiveness to superphysical realizations. Without obedience there can be no organization of the life into a pattern appropriate to the achievement of

philosophical understanding. To keep the precepts means to obey the laws of life, for no man can outrange the universal dictums and be capable at the same time of understanding the secrets of life.

3. *KSHANTI*. This may be interpreted as either perseverance or patience. Perseverance is continuity of effort, the continuance of striving over a long period of time. Metaphysics is a science not easily mastered. Years and lives must be spent in unbroken effort if the great goal is finally to be attained. Patience is willingness to wait and without patience the long process of perseverance cannot be finally consummated. Patience is not only willingness to wait, it is indifference in a sense to the time element in accomplishment. One must forget his hopes of illumination in six months or six years or sixty years, continue sincerely in his effort and realize that the reward will come in due time. The workings of nature are not to be hastened by any desperate effort to accomplish everything here and now. Without patience there can be no illumination, no consummation of effort. Metaphysics is the most profound form of human knowledge and the rewards of effort in this direction should not be envisioned as imminent. Man should never expect metaphysical enlightenment until he has perfected himself in every department of living and thinking.

4. *VIRAG*. This is interpreted as the higher indifference, detachment, the ability to release oneself from the striving of the senses, from all immoderations of aspiration or ambition, yes, even from the hope of the result or reward of effort. Obeying the law for its own sake, living nobly because it is the noble way to live, doing all things well without hope of reward or fear of loss, indifference to life, to time, to persons and to things—a complete release from the stress of striving—the hopes of success, fears of failure—all dispelled by a sustaining inward tranquillity. Without detachment there is no achievement. Philosophical indifference is not the type which neglects responsibility but does all things well, at the same time not permitting the doing or the things done to disturb the tranquillity of the inward sense.

5. *VIRYA*. This may be interpreted as either effort rightly directed, or courage wisely administered. Really the thought is effort or striving with-

out effort—a subtle Eastern metaphysical distinction. The doing of the thing is smoothly and subtly performed. All courage is directed towards the overcoming of the obstacles between the present state and the final illumination, the courage to renounce all lesser things in the cause of the greater, the courage to face danger, ridicule, criticism and even martyrdom with perfect poise, the mind fixed on the ultimate goal. Striving, in Eastern thought, is not a desperate running around or a panting after power. It is a gentle but inevitable force, never acknowledging defeat, moving slowly and certainly, beautifully and virtuously towards enlightenment.

6. *DHYANA*. This is contemplation, meditation, the inward envisioning of the goal of effort, the retiring of the objective into the subjective. At this point the disciplines become esoteric. *Dhyana* is man's subjective union with the Law. Through the practice of it the individual merges himself with universals. The true significance of the meditative process is not often understandable to those who have not already thoroughly practiced the preceding *Paramitas*. *Dhyana* is the practicing of the inward life, the silent realization by which man is finally instructed in the great universal truths, by these very truths themselves, which flow in upon him and fill him with the Law itself.

7. *PRAJNA*. This is the last of the *PARAMITAS* and is variously interpreted as either wisdom or the capacity for subjective perception. It consummates the processes and through the practice of *Prajna* wisdom, in the sense of the eternal truths of being, is finally attained. The quest ends in truth and the Law. Individuality is submerged, personality is eliminated as a philosophical factor. Universality alone continues.

The *PARAMITAS* begin in simple, physical virtue, and end in transcendent metaphysical accomplishment.

The preceding outline, while subject to minor variations in different metaphysical systems, is the inevitable formula in every sincere and honest metaphysical or mystical school. There has never been any of the great Mystery Schools that ever promised power, enlightenment or security until after the individual perfected the virtues within himself. It must be evident that a group of people gathered

from all parts of a community, with no effort made to discriminate between their varying degrees of undevelopment, can never be promised any spiritual advantage by any metaphysical teacher or organization. Metaphysics is all inward chemistry, philosophical chemistry, based on the principle: the better we are, the more we can know. If we are not anything in ourselves, it is humanly impossible for any being, human or divine, to impress upon us the realization of truths beyond the state of our own development. There is no exception to this, there is no way of avoiding, evading or escaping this fundamental metaphysical fact.

Any effort to force conditions which are not merited comes under the heading of Black Magic or sorcery. A sorcerer is simply a person who uses the mechanical processes of the will in an effort to force out of nature things or conditions not merited under the law of Karma. By hypnosis, by the exercise of will power, by formulas, it is sometimes possible to temporarily here in the physical world force the semblance of unjustified conditions. A man can steal by metaphysical means just the same as he might rob a bank or forge a name, or in some other harmful way come into possession of that which is not his own, but the mere fact that it can be accomplished in such a manner does not justify the process nor make right the wrong principle which is involved. By the malicious use of will power and animal magnetism the law of cause and effect can apparently be nullified for a short time. But again the mere fact that it can be accomplished does not establish the integrity of such a process. The only way in which any individual can honestly possess what he desires is to earn or deserve that thing. Again there are no exceptions. When some metaphysician stands up and tells you that he has a private way with the universe by which he can justify the misuse of power, only very foolish people will pay any attention to him. Black magic is not philosophy any more than bank robbery is ethics. If the whole problem is lifted to a metaphysical level, untrained minds are very apt to lose sight of values and proportions. Metaphysical black magic has flourished for many thousands of years, for there always has been and will probably continue to be for an indefinite period of time a class of people

who desire to possess without the labor of acquiring by legitimate means. No one can be morally dishonest and at the same time pretend to be spiritual or philosophical.

On the other hand it would be wrong to say that man's spiritual efforts, when wisely and honestly directed, are not rewarded in a wholly adequate way. The reason why most metaphysicians are not rewarded for their metaphysics is because they are following faulty and erroneous lines of thought and do not deserve reward. Men like Plato, Socrates, and Aristotle have been rewarded for their integrity not only by philosophical security during the periods of their lives, but by the generous praise of posterity that will remember their names and works until the end of time. Greatness may be obscured in its own day but it survives as a monument to itself and to those who achieve it. There were many brilliant men among the Athenians whose names have not survived to this century, because the measure of their achievement was too low to be regarded as a contribution to the eternal welfare of man. Politicians, diplomats, princes, the rich, the proud and the pompous who were important and revered in their own day find no place in the memory of man. The ages sought out values. That which is real ultimately receives the approbation of the race. Thus we may say that wisdom bestows security upon the individual while he lives, protects him in the invisible world to which he goes, and bestows immortality upon his name in the world which he leaves behind. What more can the reasonably minded person desire than that the good things he does shall live after him, to deserve and receive the gratitude of humanity? Wisdom bestows a security far beyond that of wealth, gives inward peace and outward patience. It clears the mind of innumerable false values that clutter up the reasoning of the majority, it frees thought to contemplate the real. Philosophy rewards men with a coinage of its own, it gives them that which they have earned and which the world cannot take from them. Wisdom is its own reward and those who possess it can never be humiliated, impoverished or degraded. Wisdom is not of this world but of the secret world that lies behind. The rewards of wisdom are not of this world but also of that secret place which is the abode of wisdom. Wise men re-

tire from worldliness to dwell in the presence of truth and in this achieve the rational end for which the human fabric was devised.

Hence we cannot say that the quest for truth is all struggle and no result, for with each small gain we make within ourselves there is an appropriate extension of consciousness and enlightenment in our natures. The only thing is that we must learn not to think of philosophy in terms of dollars and cents, of real estate and of mortgages. Philosophy does not pay us in dollars because they are not of the world of philosophy. Man has an erroneous idea that by unfolding consciousness he can become one of the princes of the earth, possessing all material things and an object of universal admiration. If a man wishes to improve his business, let him study not religion but business methods. There are institutions all over the country to fit men for greater efficiency in their various industrial, economic and commercial lines. One does not study philosophy to become a salesman, one studies salesmanship. The things which belong intrinsically to the material universe should be mastered on the material plane, with material force and material means. Religion is not super-salesmanship, nor is it a substitute for the doctor, the dentist and the grocer. The work of religion is to give man inner character, not outer opulence. It often follows that man's material conditions are improved by his religion, but it also frequently follows that materially he remains an insignificant figure. It is a terrible mistake to use spiritual means in an effort to accomplish material ends. It is a distinct prostitution of that which is too fine and too noble to be so perverted and contaminated. The honest-minded metaphysician should avoid, as he would the plague, teachers and teachings which promise him freedom from the physical responsibilities of life and the famous "peace, power and plenty" psychology of the inflated 20's.

It has been our sincere desire in the preparation of these letters to bring to you a practical summary of the problems of the spiritual life, particularly as these problems affect the beginner who must seek for truth through one of those jarring sects that make up the metaphysical-religious field of today. It may be a disappointment to some to realize that religion as aphorism or platitude is not a substitute

for living, working and thinking, but this discovery must finally be made, and once made, becomes the guiding star in the quest for real and permanent values.

If we could only restore some of the dignity and the beauty of ancient religion. If we could only bring back that olden day when the great philosophers and their disciples wandered the roads of the world, teaching the glories of the universe and the wonders of the inner self. Gone are the noble masters of that elder day. Only their shadows have descended to us, a few fragments of their words, a story, a fable. These alone bind us to the great philosophical institutions of the past. We live in a material generation and our minds have become used to the idea of interpreting everything on a cash basis. The abstract wealth of beauty, of dream, of vision, of hope and aspiration, of ethics and logic—all this is beyond the appreciation of the average man of today. We must interpret all knowledge into the productive channels of industry or else that knowledge seems very remote, abstract and impractical. The underlying materialistic psychology of the age contributes much to religious fraud. We attempt to establish our theologies on the profit system. Confused by the standards of this generation, we even try to make money-lenders of our sages and exploiters of our prophets. We induce ourselves to believe that the Pythagoreans were pioneers in the field of super-salesmanship, and that the Eastern sages and the Western philosophers were all desperately concerned with distributing prosperity among the uninformed.

We must build towards a nobler interpretation of our faiths or else prepare to see our beliefs crumble with the decadency of our economics. The whole world today is envisioning a period to come when money will not be the sovereign factor in our thoughts and lives. We are beginning to realize the limitations of wealth and that money is only useful to the degree that it can contribute to our opportunity to improve our inward selves. Today money can secure leisure but cannot guarantee the intelligent use of leisure. It can purchase education but education is bankrupt as far as ethical and æsthetic values are concerned. What all men are really seeking is some

form of inner contentment or tranquillity that can give them courage over outer circumstances. Philosophy bestows the strength of right decision, it gives resistance to temptation, and leveling all extremes of action, reduces wealth and poverty to a common state, elevating only truth to a position of first importance. We all desire to be better than we are. There are millions of people in this country who want to understand the principles of the mystic life. In their hearts these people are willing but their viewpoints are distorted by false teachings and inadequate understanding. To these people must come the realization that honesty is the beginning of wisdom and that without honesty no great spirituality can be accomplished. Honesty should have its beginning in the realization that we have no right to anything we have not earned. Also that if by any chance we temporarily secure through the accidents of the material life something that is not rightly our own by merit, the final loss of this possession is inevitable. What we have we must use wisely, what we have not we must earn. All the theological prayers of the ages put together have not the constructive power of one nobly executed action or one profoundly realized truth. To pray for things we have not earned is dishonest; to pray to be relieved of evils we have not mastered is dishonest; to desire anything that is not merited is unphilosophical.

We may be in doubt as to which cult to belong, and we may be in doubt as to which teacher we should follow. The competition of creeds may leave us upon the horns of a dilemma, but of one thing we can be sure, regardless of our creeds or our beliefs—the spiritual life begins with right action. Honesty is the first step towards truth. Self control, inward tranquillity, detachment from possession, balance of emotion—all these virtues are absolutely necessary to the understanding of any religious or philosophical system. So if you are in doubt as to which god to worship or which philosophy to study, do not decide such issues immediately. First put your life in order and the foundation of right living will give you the discrimination to choose your beliefs honestly and intelligently.

Yours sincerely,

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